

MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIM

1. (Twice Amended) A removable soft shell for a lighting bulb assembly, comprising a soft shell body formed of a transparent or semi-transparent, heat-conductible material having a predetermined outer contour, the soft shell body having an opening formed therein for receiving a light bulb therein, said opening having an inner surface portion adapted for contiguous contact with a corresponding portion of the light bulb.

REMARKS

At the outset, the courtesies extended by the Examiner in granting the 14 May 2003 Interview are appreciatively acknowledged. This case has been carefully reviewed and analyzed in view of the Final Office Action dated 18 February 2003 and the discussions had at that Interview. Responsive thereto, Claim 1 has been amended further amended to further clarify Applicant's invention for this Patent Application.

In the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the previously-cited Shu reference, in view of the newly-cited Gardner reference. The Examiner acknowledged that Shu fails to disclose an inner surface portion adapted for contiguous contact with a corresponding portion of the light bulb, but cited the Gardner reference for such feature. The Examiner then concluded that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have provided Shu's shell with such contiguous contact feature.

In substance, the discussions had at the interview centered primarily around the Gardner reference. The Examiner acknowledged that Gardner's pre-fabricated antenna lamp assembly is distinguishable from the removable type of shell for a lighting bulb assembly which Applicant's soft shell forms. The Examiner noted that an update search would be required, but acknowledged that a clarification in Claim 1 in this regard would indeed clarify the distinctions over the prior art thus far of record.

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Accordingly, Claim 1 has been further amended to now more clearly recite “A removable soft shell for a lighting bulb assembly” comprising the recited combination of features. As plainly shown, for instance, in FIGS. 2 and 3 of the subject Patent Application, Applicant’s soft shell is of the type that may be conveniently placed onto then removed from the lighting bulb assembly. What is more, Applicant’s soft shell includes, among other things, “an inner surface portion adapted for contiguous contact with a corresponding portion of the light bulb,” as Claim 1 further recites.

The primarily cited Shu reference fails to disclose any such features, as the Examiner acknowledged. While the secondarily cited Gardner reference does disclose a contiguous contact between a spherical casing 12 and a neon bulb 14, those components are pre-fabricated into one self-contained assembly whose lower tube 24 may be slipped onto the end of an antenna 30 for operation. As the reference itself makes clear, this “casing 12 is an encapsulating material” that is not only “molded around the bulb,” but also around “the upper end of the tube 24,” so as to ensure that “the bulb 14 is embedded” securely therein. (Column 2; lines 34-37). The reference notes, moreover, that the “casing material preferably is of plastic,...or any other suitable organic thermoplastic or thermosetting resin, or may be of glass or other material which is sufficiently strong to withstand the environmental conditions to which it will be exposed,” (Column 2; lines 38-44). That is, the casing pre-molded to encapsulate the bulb is formed with a hard, strongly rigid configuration. This

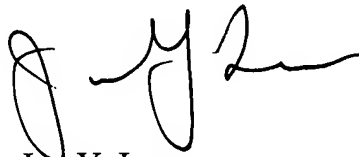
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teaches quite explicitly against any casing removable from the neon bulb 14, let alone such removable casing having "a soft shell body," as Applicant's Claim 1 recites.

It is respectfully submitted, therefore, that the cited Shu and Gardner references, even when considered together, fail to disclose the unique combination of elements now more clearly recited by Applicant's Claim for the purposes and objectives disclosed in the subject Patent Application.

It is now believed that the subject Patent Application has been placed in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Dated: 5/15/2003

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